3.0 STUDY PURPOSE AND NEED

One goal within Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks six year operations plan for the fisheries program is to "restore and enhance degraded habitats" by implementing habitat restoration projects and administering the Future Fisheries Improvement Program to restore important habitats on public and private lands. The proposed Cartersville Dam fish passage improvement project would help meet this goal.

Since it was built in the early 1900's, this dam has likely impeded the upstream migration of shovelnose sturgeon and other fish species native to the Yellowstone River. Another fish passage barrier is created by the Intake Dam (River Mile 73.0), which is located downstream of the Cartersville Dam (River Mile 238.5) in Dawson County, Montana. This dam creates a fish barrier for pallid sturgeon (Scaphirhynchus albus), an endangered species that is found only downstream of the Intake Dam. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is currently working on a project that will provide fish passage at the Intake dam. Once that project is complete, the Cartersville Dam will be the next barrier that precludes the upstream movement of pallid sturgeon, shovelnose sturgeon, and other fish species.

The overall intent of the Cartersville Dam project is to modify the dam to improve fish passage through this section of the Yellowstone River, while continuing to provide the water needed for the Cartersville Irrigation District. The primary project objectives are to:

1. Maintain the ability of the irrigation district to divert water at all flow levels
2. Allow upstream passage of native fishes, particularly sturgeon
3. Provide minimal maintenance requirements
4. Increase public safety
5. Maintain recreation opportunities at the adjacent city park